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The way how a Religious Correſpondencie may be procured and maintained amongſt the Churches. For their mutuall ſafety, and the advancement of the Goſpel at home and abroad.

IF it be granted, as it is an undeniable truth, that the Godly party of this Nation is more deeply engaged to endevour a Religious Correſpondency with Forreign Proteſtants then any other people in all the World; then it will follow, that they are bound to lay to heart more then others, the way how this Correſpondency may be procured aud maintained. Now the way which the Lord hath ordain'd for the building up of the Body of Chriſt, amongſt the Saints; is that only, which in a Goſpel work, to advance the Truth, and hold forth the light of life, is to be choſen amongſt the Churches; and I ſuppoſe, that none can hope for a bleſſing upon any other way. As for this way, I finde it expreſſed by the Apoſtle to be this. That the Saints who depend upon Chriſt as upon their head, and ſo make up his Body, ſhould endevour to edifie themſelves in Love, by that which every joint ſupplieth, according to the effectual working thereof in the meaſure of every part: where two things belonging to the communion of Saints, are implied and preſuppoſed; as alſo elſ-where expreſly commanded. Ephes. 4. 15, 16.

Firſt, that the Saints ſhould not look to their own things alone, but every one to the things of others alſo. Phil. 2. 4.

Secondly, that the end for which we ſhould look to the things of others as wel as our own, ſhould be to provoke them to love and to good works. And if theſe duties be not at all minded, upon a true ſpiritual and Goſpel account it is evident, that the main and fundamental rules of Goſpel-communion is wholly neglected: therefore ſuch as in the midſt of theſe diſtracted courſes of men in the World; deſire to appear Saints: and Heb. 10. 24.

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ſhine as lights, ought conſcionably to lay to heart; what in this
The Queſtion. preſent Juncture of time, ſhould be done by us in conformity to this Rule; namely, what the Goſpel way and manner of proceeding, ſhould be in our preſent caſe, to provoke the Saints at Home and abroad to love and good works.

The Anſwer. To anſwer this Queſtion, without preſuming to preſcribe any thing to others I ſhall humbly ſuggeſt that which may be without Prejudice taken into conſideration by all, and be made uſe of by thoſe who are in places, as God ſhall direct their ſpirits, and give them opportunity.

Let it then be thought upon whether the Leaders of our Publick Affairs, both in ſpiritual and humane wayes, ſuch as offer themſelves up unto Chriſt, ſhould not think it a part of their duty to encourage thoſe, who holding the foundations of Faith and Obedience, make Profeſſion of the Ordinances of Chriſt; to own one another in that whereunto they have attain'd: and to aſſociate one with another ſo far as they are come, to walk by the ſame Rule, for mutual Edification; notwithſtanding ſome differences which may be ſtill found amongſt them, *in extra* fundamental matters, according to the Apoſtles advice, *Philip.* 3.15,16.

And becauſe this Aſſociation ought not to be the effect of a a Magiſtratical Power, but ſhould proceed from the Principles of holy communion, according to the effectual working in the meaſure of every part: that it may be the fruit of a free willing Goſpel obedience, by that which every joint ſupplieth: therefore each party ſhould be intreated by thoſe that have an intereſt in them (nor ſhould any think it below him, how great ſoever, to intreat others for Chriſts ſake in Goſpel concernments) to declare as from themſelves theſe following matters.

1 What agreement there is between them and other Parties profeſſing the Goſpel in this Nation? and how far they think themſelves united with them, in matters of Faith, of Worſhip, and of Diſcipline?

2 What the Goſpel Rules of mutual forbearance are, which they think themſelves bound to obſerve towards others in caſes of difference; till God give in further light, that in the mean time, the occaſions of ſtrife, of ſcandals, and of breaches may be avoided.

3 What

3 What their advice is Concerning the way of Reconciling differences, and how they may build up one another in that whereunto they have attained, notwithstanding lesser differences; which overthrow not the foundation.

4 What course they would advise to be taken, to represse the scandalous and disorderly wayes, wherein some set themselves to overthrow all the foundations, both of Church and humane Societies; by taking aw[illegible]he Ordinances of Publick worship, and of all civill subject[illegible]e higher Powers.

If each Party can be [illegible]d and obliged to declare their sense freely Concerning these [illegible] their declarations may be taken together, and compared; and that wherein they shall be found all to agree and speak the same thing, may be collected by it self as their mutual Harmonie which the Supream Power should approve and Ratifie; as that which in the Publick way of the profession they will owne and countenance with Authority; it being the Agreement of the Churches and Saints of the Nation.

Whiles this matter is in Agitation another motion may be made, by fit Agents which will be subordinate unto the former; and may by Gods blessing help it forward to be effectual to some good purpose; which is. *That the Chief leading men of the Orthodox Parties should be induced to declare two things.*

1 First, what the Relation is wherein they desire to stand towards forreign Protestant Churches: and how farre they doe owne them as Brethren in Christ?

2 What Concurrence and Correspondency, they are willing to maintain with them for a cõmon Gospel interest, w[illegible] is the Truth of the holy Profession, that it may be with one lip and shoulder, held forth unto the world against the common enemies thereof.

If a Declaration conteining these two things can be obteined, from the leading Ministers of the Churches, as a consequence of the Publick Declarations which the State hath put forth formerly to this effect: then an Agent might be employed towards the Forreign Churches, who should be instructed and enabled to acquaint them with these following matters.

1 What the true state and justice of our Cause and proceeding hath been hitherto, against the Enemies of our Civil and Religious Liberties.

2 What our desires and inclinations are, to concur with the Godly Parties abroad in the common interest of Religion; and upon what grounds we are now moved to make this motion unto them.

3 What the means are by which our concurrence and correspondency with them may be entertained for the propagating of the Truth and common safety.

And whether our Agreement wit[redacted] United Provinces take effect or not, I conceive, the End[redacted] be of great use: not onely for our own strength, by th[redacted] of our spirits at home; but for the gaining of the Prayers [redacted] Affections of the Godly Party abroad: and for the vindication of our former Proceedings against the Reproches of malicious Adversaries, which have discredited us abroad; & for the ingratiating of our future undertakings: wherein we may be led forth by the good hand of God, to advance the Kingdome of Jesus Christ amongst the Neighbour Nations. But if no such Endevours be set afoot; it is very evident to me, that we shall not onely be wekened, and more and more divided at home, but be opposed and lookt upon as Enemies, by all the Professors of the Gospel in Forreign Parts, which I would not feare much; if it should not come upon us by our own default, and through the neglect of a duty which God requires of us and which wee are engaged to performe, both by the Rules of the Gospel, and by our owne solemn Professions; in the face of all the Churches and of the whole world: which to make good according to my ability, and for the discharge of my conscience that I may not be found guilty of neglecting my Uowes, I doe offer in all humilitie these suggestions; and as a Solicitor of Publick Gospel duties towards the Churches, shall Remaine a Servant thereof in Christ.

FINIS.